

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9968

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4128

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PINS, LE, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ELECT SARKIS

REF: BEIRUT 4112

1. FOLLOWING DELIVERY OF MY LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS SUNDAY, MAY 9, SARKIS SENT WORD HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE ME AT 7 O'CLOCK THAT EVENING. WAS WARMLY GREETED AND HAD A VERY USEFUL HOUR LONG SESSION WITH HIM.

2. SARKIS STRESSED THAT HE INTENDED TO BE PRESIDENT FOR ALL LEBANESE, WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED THAT THE VOTING BREAK-DOWN SHOWED THAT HE HAD BEEN ELECTED WITH LARGE SUPPORT FROM THE MOSOLEM COMMUNITY. HE DID NOT GO INTO MUCH DETAIL BUT POINTED TO THE ENORMITY OF THE RDCONSTRUCHION JOB FACING THE COUNTRY AND TO THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURITY.

3. ON SECURITY, HE VISUALIZED FOUR PRINCIPAL GROUPS: THE CHRISTIANS, THE SYRIANS, THE PALESTINIANS AND THE LEFT. THE FIRST TWO AND THE LAST TWO HAD SOME COMMON BUT NOT COMPLETELY IDENTICAL INTERESTS. HE WAS ENCOURAGED THAT ARAFAT HAD CALLED HIM TO CONGRATULATE HIM. HE HOPED TO REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH ARAFAT AND TO TRY TO WORK WITH HIM.

4. I INDICATED THAT IT SEEMED IMPORTANT FOR THE WORK OF CON-
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CILIATION TO GET UNDERWAY. HE REPLIED THAT HE HAD ALREADY

CALLED JUMBLATT IN ORDER TO TRY TO START THE PROCESS. I THEN OBSERVED THAT DIALOGUE SEEMED TO BE A VALUABLE INSTRUMENT FOR ENCOURAGING CONCILIATION. HE CONCURRED. INFORMED ME THAT PIERRE GEMAYEL'S SON, BACHIR, WAS MEETING WITH JUMBLATT ON MAY 10. (WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED THAT JUMBLATT WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING BACHIR.) ASKING HIS VIEWS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING BETWEEN JUMBLATT AND PIERRE GEMAYEL, SARKIS COMMENTED THAT FURTHER PREPARATION WAS NECESSARY. IN PARTICULAR THE FIGHTING HAD NOT STOPPED. CAUTIONED HIM ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF IMPOSING CONDITIONS ON DIALOGUE.

5. REGARDING THE FIGHTING, I NOTED THAT THERE WERE BATTLES IN THE MOUNTAIN AREAS AND THAT THESE HAD BEEN STARTED BY THE CHRISTIANS. MOREOVER, WE UNDERSTOOD THAT A LARGE SCALE CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVE WAS IN THE OFFING. IF THE OFFENSIVE TOOK PLACE IT WOULD PIT THE CHRISTIANS DIRECTLY AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS HOLDING THE NEARBY POSITIONS. SUCH ACTION, I THOUGHT, WAS EXTREMELY UNWISE. FIRST IT WOULD CONSIDERABLY LESSEN THE CHANCES OF OBTAINING ARAFAT'S COLLABORATION AND WOULD DRIVE ARAFAT MORE INTO JUMBLATT'S ARMS. SECONDLY IT WOULD PROBABLY CAUSE THE FIGHTING TO SPREAD TO THE CITY. ALL THIS WOULD BE NOT ONLY TRAGIC BUT SOMEWHAT IRONIC INASMUCH AS WE UNDERSTOOD THAT ARAFAT WAS PREPARED TO ABANDON THESE MOUNTAIN POSITIONS ONCE A SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED.

6. SARKIS THANKED ME FOR THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND SAID THAT HE WOULD TAKE STEPS IMMEDIATELY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE CHRISTIAN SIDE.

7. AS CAN BE SEEN, THE MAIN FOCUS OF OUR TALK WAS ON SECURITY AND RELATED MATTERS. THIS IS AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE PRIORITIES THAT FACE THE COUNTRY.

8. SARKIS WAS AWARE THAT I WAS DEPARTING MAY 11. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE WORK I HAD DONE HERE AND SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO COOPERATING CLOSELY WITH THE NEXT AMBASSADOR. I ASSURED HIM THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH HIM CLOSELY AND TO BE OF WHATEVER ASSISTANCE WE COULD.

9. THIS WAS MY SECOND MEETING WITH SARKIS AND IT STRENGTHENED MY VIEW THAT HE IS MATURE, KNOWLEDGEABLE, COMPETENT AND CONCILIATORY. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WILL BE ABLE TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM FALLING INTO THE ABYSS, BUT I THINK HE HAS A BETTER CHANCE THAN ANYONE ELSE OF DOING SO.

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